

I urge you to oppose the AT&T Comcast merger, which threatens the public interest principles that are essential to the Internet as an open and nondiscriminatory communications medium. The cable industry has long been characterized by anticompetitive local monopolies, restrictive control over content and services, high subscription rates and poor customer service. There is every reason to believe that these practices will be replicated in the combined company's control over high-speed Internet connections. AT&T Comcast will become a powerful media gatekeeper, leveraging its control over the network to exert undo influence over the evolution of broadband Internet content and services. The resulting lack of competition, innovation and diversity will harm both our economy and our democracy in the long run, with consumers left to bear the costs.

You can forget all the canned rhetoric above if you want. It makes sense, but it isn't my text, which follows.

Everytime a major issue faces Congress or the regulatory bureaucracy, voters and consumers have to scramble like mad to 'educate' the government about our concerns. Or so it seems.

You really don't have to be told, just reminded from time to time that somebody is still watching over your shoulders. After all, you don't know if you've clipped the sheep until it bleats, right?

I don't recall any arguments to the effect that ATT-Comcast will represent a 'natural' monopoly, so let's not kid ourselves that a company with over 50% of the cable-equipped households in its clutches will serve anybody but itself.

Poppy Bush, Dan Quayle, and the rest of the GOP spellbinders tried to convince people that oligopolies in radio broadcasting would guarantee more "voices" in the national discourse, but of course that was a load of pigpoop. Now we are 'served' by Clear Channel radio which owns over 1,200 stations nationwide. So much for increasing the number of viewpoints presented in the World's Greatest Democracy. Most of these stations--if not all of them--are automated machines that broadcast almost identical playlists and little or no community news or public affairs programming.

Now the FCC proposes to do the same with the ATT-Comcast merger. After one company controls the programming available to over half the national cable market, what do you suppose will happen to 'diversity' in cablevision content?

(I can't believe this discussion is necessary.)

The arguments of the Quayle/BUsh commissions on competitiveness were pure crap, of course. I can't believe they wasted time on this imbecilic rhetoric since it works only on the most simple-minded ignoramuses who probably don't vote, read the press, or otherwise participate in the 'national conversation'.

Perhaps it was only some sort of Orwellian impulse that seized the Bush Administration (like the current one), forcing its public relations apparatus to

gear up a silly and shallow campaign to defend what was obviously a complete sell-out to the corporate sponsors of their election campaigns and inaugural celebrations.

But thanks be to God, Poppy lasted only one term. Let's hope his son does no better, in large part for his sell-out to the same interests that captured his father's administration. And that includes the ATT-Comcast merger principals and their supporters.

Congress isn't stupid, just corrupt. The revolving door of employment at the FCC (already headed by the ultimately self-serving Michael Powell) guarantees that the industry gets its way there, too.

So we all know the score. The question is what the voters can muster against corrupt politicians and greedy 'regulators' who sell us out at every turn. COunt me as one more voter who won't forget it if the FCC sells us out one more time.